

ADVANCING BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROJECT

THE ECUADOR NFE PROJECT
LITERACY'S RAINBOW
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER



ENRIQUE TASIGUANO MUZO
NON-FORMAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST

FEBRUARY 1999



U.S. Agency for International Development • Bureau for Global Field Programs, Field Support and Research
Center for Human Capacity Development • Office of Basic Education and Learning Systems

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PREFACE

About this report

All too rarely does one have the opportunity to revisit a development project twenty-five years later to look for traces left behind by the original efforts. This document reports on one of those scarce opportunities. The report is even more remarkable because it is about a non-formal education project located in poor rural communities in Ecuador. The study sought evidence of continuing impact on institutions, educational materials, and, above all, on the people who formed the core of the project.

Equally unusual is the evaluation method of the study, employing a process that replicates the values and principles on which the project was based to evaluate it. The project was based on a set of what were then innovative—even radical—ideas about ways to provide education to the rural populations that had no access to schooling. The project was a child of the intellectual ferment produced by the ideas of Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire. It was a challenge to convert those ideas into practical methods that could be used in real contexts. These ideas initially found a home in the Center for International Education (CIE) at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and were then given an arena in which to test ways of applying them through the support of the USAID Mission in Ecuador.

The philosophy of CIE in implementing the activity resulted in a local project team headed and staffed by Ecuadorians (a very rare occurrence in those days), and a process that heavily involved client populations in the development, testing, and implementation of a wide variety of innovative approaches to non-formal education, or NFE. The project was rooted in a series of NFE principles that included grounding the learning in the daily realities of the learners; using nonprofessionals as local facilitators of learning and action; using a wide variety of unusual learning materials that were fun to use, involving, and stimulating; and rapidly developing a process by which learners and facilitators became the principal source of new ideas for materials.

The project became known both in and out of Ecuador for a series of simulations and fluency games that formed the basis of community learning activities. At the time, the idea that games could be used as useful learning materials, particularly for illiterate adults in rural contexts met with considerable skepticism. With adaptation and experience, the project staff learned more about what worked and how to facilitate effective learning with such approaches. Some of the simulations and theater methods turned out to be very powerful—provoking intense participation and, not infrequently, unwanted

attention from local power brokers who felt threatened by the potential for awakening hitherto submissive populations.

The results of experimentation with a variety of methods and materials in Ecuador were published during the project in a series of technical notes distributed to NFE practitioners around the world (most are still available). Gradually the ideas took hold and today variations on the games and materials developed in Ecuador can be found throughout the world. Approaches that NFE practitioners today take for granted can in many cases be traced back to the seminal activities of the Ecuador NFE project. There is clear evidence of the impact of the project in other parts of the world, but the intriguing question investigated in this study is discovering what is the effect of the project today within Ecuador.

Not surprisingly, this study reveals that the most effective lasting impact of the project has been the transformation of those who worked as community facilitators in the form of their continuing commitment to the challenge of social change. Tracing their personal careers shows that many have become leaders while others continue to live life in a way that exemplifies the values embedded in the project. The ability to transform individuals and their understanding of how the structures in their society work produces people who continue to work to promote liberatory learning and action throughout their lives, long after the project is finished.

The learning materials and the pedagogies pioneered by the project have been absorbed by a range of NGOs, and in many cases were taken over by the adult education section of the Ministry of Education. Inevitably the spread of methods is accompanied by some dilution of the principles and some loss of the emphasis on social change and personal liberation, but the spread and persistence of the ideas is part of the legacy of the project that lives on in Ecuador and elsewhere.

Finally, the evaluation should be read also as a creative and noteworthy example of participatory evaluation. The process gives priority to insuring that the outcomes are as much about the growth and learning of the participants as they are about the data produced. Some will be unhappy with the outcome because of the limited quantitative data and the emphasis on documenting the life paths of participants. Others will celebrate both the impact on the participants and the documentation of the long-term impact in producing sensitized leaders for civil society in Ecuador, particularly among marginalized communities.

We hope that the evaluation will stimulate renewed interest in the methods, materials, and basic principles that characterized the original project. Few projects have generated such an extensive and far-reaching outcomes for such a modest investment of less

than \$500,000. Most of the outcomes were unforeseen at the time, and in fact required some significant risk taking on the part of project staff and the managers within USAID. This study provides a gratifying look at the results, which justify the vision and the commitment of all who took risks to make the project a reality in the 1970s.

*—Professor David R. Evans
Center for International Education
University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

The Historical Context of the Ecuador NFE Project

To discuss what has really happened during the last two decades as a result of the Ecuador NFE project, it is necessary to put the project in the context of the mid 1970s.

On the negative side were two factors. First, there was pressure from the U.S. State Department to implement social development initiatives. The State Department found no reason to support a repressive state since the so-called “revolutionary groups” in Ecuador were very weak. (Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina were a different story, however. In Chile, the communist party was quite strong, and Allende became president through the “force” of votes.) Second, the \$5 million UNESCO functional literacy project had recently ended, leaving more questions than answers. By some accounts, the UNESCO project was the last—though not the largest—failure of the so called “literacy for life” era. These events contributed to the bitter taste of frustration among politicians and development managers in Ecuador.

On the other hand, there were also several positive developments, such as the openness to investing in social development on the part of the USAID Mission. Second was the inspiration of Project Officer Edward Hirabayashi, who introduced spectacular changes after his arrival in 1969. Hirabayashi supported a private consulting organization (CEMA) to provide government staff and civil society organizations with the training they needed to “get closer to” the campesinos living in remote and isolated rural communities. CEMA was aided by the invaluable assistance of the Center for International Education, where a motivated and experienced group of graduate students struggled to come up with viable approaches to solving problems of community education. This spirit of innovation was accompanied by the conviction that education should be at the center of any kind of meaningful development and change.

These negative and positive factors were accompanied by a series of unique events that contributed to the success of the Ecuador NFE project. There was the gentle and effective negotiation that took place between Jon Gant, USAID/Ecuador’s education

Enrique Tasiguano Muzo

officer and David Evans, director of CIE. Both showed a tolerance for risk and willingness to take creative chances to establish a learning community made up of very different actors from what had been the norm in these types of endeavors. Both also were ready to commit themselves to actual improvements in campesino lives through the use of basic skills as tools for individual, family, and community development.

*—Patricio Barrigo Fuente, First Director
Ecuador NFE Project
Quito, Ecuador*

INTRODUCTION

After sowing, the time will come to weave the highlands together with the lowlands, communities with communities, to mend borders.... After weaving, it will be time to build. —CWANKAR, Ramiro Reinaga, Tawa Inti Suyo, 1993, p. 330

The first part of this paper summarizes the events and the process of this study. It was particularly pleasant to relive the experience of Ecuador's non-formal education (or NFE) project at the *campesino*, or peasant, level. Indeed, as the facilitators began collecting information, they recommitted themselves to working for development through the creative, liberating, and participatory approach to education embodied by NFE. In spite of the short life of the project—just four years—it achieved significant accomplishments that we want, more than two decades later, to “recapture” and present to a new generation.

The second part of this paper presents a “rainbow allegory,” which invites us to consider what is the value of ethnic and cultural pluralism. It is also an invitation to form a constructive critique of formal education. In our view, formal education tends to produce mass uniformity, does not respect cultural pluralism, and stymies creativity. Thus, formal education can play a role in alienating people from their cultural contexts and hindering their formation as full human beings.

The main part of the text contains the results of the research of the university research support team. This team, formed by students of campesino background, visited the communities affected by the project. The experiences they share here are from their own perspective. The team asked community members how they create, promote, assess, and lead the development of education. They also asked them how they became leaders and critics of the formal education system and about their struggle to make it democratic. The answers provide evidence of the beneficial changes that NFE has helped make possible.

The NFE project lasted from 1971 to 1976 under an agreement between the University of Massachusetts and Ecuador's Ministry of Education and Culture. USAID provided financial resources. The agreement, called the Non-Formal Education Project of Ecuador, was managed in Quito by a devoted work team of NFE facilitators that, throughout the life of the project and even after its abrupt end, continued to have an influence on campesino life.

In many ways, NFE pioneered campesino education. NFE is oriented to less privileged people such as slum dwellers and those who live in rural and marginal areas where poverty and governmental inattention result in the lack of basic services.

An anecdote of NFE's beginning seems fitting here. One evening in June 1995, as I traveled to the south of the country on an interprovincial bus, a young man in his early twenties asked me if I was "Manuel Santi." Somewhat surprised, I answered "yes." Suddenly, the conversation started to flow agreeably as we each remembered the past two decades of our lives. He told me that as a small child he had heard about "the facilitators," the games, the meetings, the visits of colleagues from Quito, campesino education, and about how Manuel Santi photo magazines circulated among nearby campesino communities—which were for a long time the only reading material available. We talked about how everyone was treated as a partner and of how communities resolved problems in meetings where there was a lot of trust. "All of this continues to happen even today in Tutupala," he said. The young man's name was Jorge Paredes Silva, a native of Tutupala, Chimborazo, where the NFE project was first begun.

This and other encounters like it led to a whole chain of recollections and concerns that I shared during a trip to Washington, D.C. in 1995. There I met with old NFE collaborators and made a presentation on "Huahua Huasi (childcare centers): An Experience in Non-Formal Education in Ecuador." This childcare program was sponsored for fourteen years by the Marginal Rural Development Fund (FODERUMA) of Ecuador's Central Bank. These circumstances, along with the support of Jim Hoxeng at USAID and the ABEL2 project have allowed us to try to recover our NFE experience in Ecuador.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION

My thanks go to those involved in this endeavor, including the Education Development Center, the ABEL2 project, Andrea Bosch, Steve Anzalone, Yusra Visser, and to those who in the future may become involved in this type of work.

In Ecuador, my thanks to the following facilitators: Mesías Silva, from Tutupala; Eufemia Lara, from Guazaso; Ernestina Martínez, from Quimiag; Marcelino Yuquilema San Juan and Rogelio Inca, from Cajabamba-Sicalpa; José Antonio Sagñay, from Pulucate; Pepe Huashima and Juan Solano, members of the SEV of Azuay at that time; Carlos Avellán, Lenín Moreira, Miguel Cedeño, Ramón Salazar, Espíritu García, Violeta Chica, Rosa Zambrano, Fanny Vera, José Muñoz, Ramón Valencia, and others in the province of Manabí, who continue to keep the spirit of NFE alive. Neither time nor the vicissitudes of life was able to erase from their faces the joy of having participated in this noble experience.

Likewise, I would like to acknowledge the support of the campesino communities of Tutupala, Columbe, Llano Grande, San Isidro, Charapotó, Cayambe, and Muyurco who with openness and good faith allowed us to conduct our investigations without expecting anything more than an afternoon of remembrance and sharing. I am grateful for the support of Germán Guamán for his accounting work, who by deciphering the “numbers” allowed me to dedicate my time to the heart and soul of this document. My thanks to the “Saila Ñan” and “Samari” messengers of culture, who allowed us to return the favor, as is the custom in the Ecuadorian countryside, by helping us in the communities with music and dramatizations.

I want to repeat my thanks for the work of the facilitators, who, like Quixote, with “shield in hand and spear in the scabbard,” threw themselves into the task of recovering information and bringing back to life events of twenty years in the past. They relived the meetings and workshops with joy and generosity, shared experiences with their people and with visitors, and revived the vitality and integrity of twenty years ago. This document has been produced by their efforts.

Finally, I would like to thank the research support team, comprised of students of the Central University of Ecuador in their fourth year at the Faculty of Social Communication, which carried out the study. This team was put together by Aymé Quijia, Ximena Aldaz, Anita Lucía Tasiguano, and Susana Zhagñay. These women helped the team (which had little background beyond the introductory workshop and its involvement in the campesino communities) to compile valuable information to share with us.

This document is dedicated to the campesinos, that they may be able to strengthen their capacity for self-reliance, and to the institutions and individuals working in rural

development with an emphasis on education. In these areas there is a special need for aggressive projects that demand courage and creativity to carry out and that encourage changes in behavior (as opposed to meaningless, or even harmful, works of infrastructure).

This study attempts to serve as a resource for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and official institutions dedicated to community development. The values espoused by the NFE approach are found in the countryside, in conversations with campesinos, and in the positive responses of its participants who—twenty years later—still think more critically. It is commendable to see the strength of the facilitators and their communities. They have learned how to survive the economic deterioration of the country, which has hit the poor the hardest. They have been able to reactivate immediately the NFE endeavor, although we have not been in contact for two decades. Their personalities have remained whole, and they have been eager to become involved in new experiences. At the same time, they are carrying on their long-term struggle to improve the wellbeing of their communities.

Governmental and non-governmental bodies, official and unofficial groups working in development should keep in mind the need to follow the many “chaquiñanes” (footpaths, in Quichua) of education and development and to put to one side the obsession with “tasks.” These footpaths lead to the roads and highways of much desired development. This approach will allow mutual growth among the user, the native or foreign change agent, and the institutions, all within a framework of mutual respect.

One problem that prevents marginal communities from participating in progress and development is the low credibility given to the knowledge and practices of the campesinos and people from marginal urban areas, or as some say society’s “lower strata.” Consequently, huge resources are wasted on “redeeming” them when, as the NFE experience demonstrated, all we have to do is accompany them while they move themselves forward.

METHODOLOGY

Due to this study's informal nature, the methodology grew out of conversations and discussions with the “compañeros” (companions) and other actors involved in the social life of the communities who little by little became involved in the project. They joined in the discussions without ignoring the central task, which was to study the impact, twenty years later, of NFE in Ecuador. Therefore, I must give a word of warning: this is not an “academic” document. It is, rather, an authentic account from those of us who have lived this experience among the people. It is from there and in our own way that we express it. This “book” is also not the product of a writer; that concept is limited to other experts in the use of written language. Those of us involved in this experience belong to an oral tradition, and it has only been by dint of “conquests” that we have been able to break into areas that had been previously closed to us. The first step required was to contact the sources of the events: the communities, individuals, and educational institutions that were directly linked at that time with parasystematic, wider-curricular, out-of-school, or popular education, as NFE is called nowadays.

We traveled to the places where the NFE project was implemented. The first visits were to Latacunga and Pujilí in Cotopaxi province; Agato and La Compañía in Imbabura province; Colonche and Bambil Collao in Guayas province; Salasacas, Puñachisac, and El Rosario in Tungurahua province; and Gradas Chico, San Simón, and Cachizagua in Bolívar province. There we found concrete memories, expressions of satisfaction, and the desire to return to the experiences of NFE.

But where we finally saw the courage and conviction to uphold and continue the work of NFE—even though the agreement had ended and there were no longer guides, coordination, funds, or written agreements—was in Tutupala, Pulucate, and Columbe in Chimborazo province and in the rural communities of San Isidro, Tosagua, Rocafuerte, and Carapotó in Manabí province. Likewise, in the provinces of Azuay, Cañar, and Carchi the memory of NFE continues to live.

Llano Grande, an indigenous community in the province of Pichincha, played an important role as a catalyst and counterpart for the communities that were contacted. They had the mission of conveying the cultural message and they fulfilled what is considered the “payment” for being received with openness, hospitality, welcome, and a willingness to become involved with NFE. In the campesino and indigenous cultures, visitors never arrive nor leave with empty hands.

In the first meeting of facilitators, in Tutupala, we agreed to carry out the following activities:

- ▶ Contact and invite facilitators from each region or sector using personal and direct visits, the Chimborazo Radio Schools, Radio Mensaje of Pichincha, and word of mouth.
- ▶ Commit to and prepare two-day workshops in the provinces of Chimborazo, Manabí, and Pichincha.
- ▶ Plan a cultural encounter as part of the first stage of involvement with the host community, local leaders and authorities, and educational institutions working in educational development. The purpose of the encounter was to celebrate the survival of NFE and to allow the research team to gather data.
- ▶ Revise and commit to applying the “elliptical spiral learning methodology” in the NFE workshops and encounters. For readers’ information, the methodology is as follows: To live the experience of the reencounter and move into a process of reflection, based on the clarification and ordering of ideas, the conceptualization of which will allow the preparation of appropriate and prioritized actions. These actions will in turn lead to a result, which will be a new experience. Thus, the beginning of an elliptical spiral (the quality of broadening knowledge) will be established.
- ▶ Ensure as much interaction as possible between facilitators, educational authorities, leaders, and other personalities, and make use of this opportunity to reactivate campesino education and make evident the importance of the survival of this type of education as a liberating alternative to traditional teaching.
- ▶ Use existing NFE materials and documentation sponsored by the agreement, and present them to those interested in studying in depth the process of education by campesinos for campesinos.
- ▶ Hold a final meeting to analyze the results, decide the future of NFE, build commitment to this work, and ensure continuity, particularly with regard to campesino education.
- ▶ Centralize information, promote knowledge and distribution of that information, and establish contacts to preserve and disseminate NFE for the future.

The enthusiasm of the facilitators and of the research support team, after the first few meetings, allowed us to form commissions that would be in charge of the operational part. For this, we set up the following teams:

Chimborazo province

Mesías Silva

Eufemia Lara

Tutupala

Guasazo

Ernestina Martínez	Quimiag
Marcelino Yuquilema	San Juan
Rogelio Inca	Sicalpa
José A. Sagñay	Pulucate

Manabí province

Carlos Avellán	Portoviejo
Lenín Moreira	Portoviejo
Carlos Vélez	Portoviejo
José Jacinto Muñoz	San Isidro
Miguel Cedeño A.	San Isidro
Violeta Chica U.	Charapotó

Research support team

Aymé Quijia	Nayón
Ximena Aldaz	Sta. Rita, Quito
Susana Zhagñay	Cañar
Anita Lucía Tasiguano	Llano Grande, Calderón

Direction and coordination

Enrique Tasiguano

Accounting support

Germán Guamán

The first workshop was led by the research support team to explain the existence of an educational project at the rural level and the assumption that it would survive in its own way at the end. Likewise, in meetings and workshops with the team of facilitators, activities were planned to gather information regarding the years that followed June 1976 in each of their communities. This information would be given to and analyzed by the research team.

The cultural encounters were enthusiastically received by the communities. The young people who were not a part of the first experience took advantage of the occasion to ask questions about NFE. In small groups they shared information about their native communities.

Llano Grande as the Catalyzing Counterpart for the Communities

The first test of NFE games like “The Seven Steps in Learning to Read and Write” was carried out in the Llano Grande community. Likewise, the “Manuel Santi” photo novels were produced there with the enthusiastic and generous participation of the community. In addition, in the practice of NFE, I almost unconsciously played my role as facilitator in different community actions, creating opportunities for young people to work on productive projects as a way to finance their studies. For this, we had support from the Ministry of Agriculture through its office for 4-H Clubs. The same thing happened with adults, where some time after the NFE project had ended, I fulfilled an advisory role in the creation of popular cultural centers with support from the Department of Out-of-School Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The recovery of the culture, the awareness of being an Indian people with values that contribute to society, the eradication of illiteracy in people under 50, and the formation of the Indigenous Union of Communities of Calderón (UCIC) are some of the results of NFE in Llano Grande.

These and other experiences were shared throughout the entire process of collecting data for this research.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: HOW IT HAPPENED BEFORE

NFE must have been born long ago, in the art of survival of the people, in their handing down of wisdom from one generation to another, in their cultural expressions, and in their technological and scientific results. It must have been floating in the air, ready to nest in the minds of thinkers and become real by merely invoking the will to do so, in any part of the world. NFE adapts its form to the dimensions of the place where it occurs. Ecuador in 1971 was a country that had been suffering under a prolonged dictatorship supported by an oil boom; neither produced relief or improvement in indigenous peoples' lives. According to the many documents, technical notes, textbooks, reports, and evaluations, it is clear that the Ecuador NFE project continues to be a reality, stripped to its essence and in harmony with peoples' needs.

NFE in Ecuador: The Beginning and the Formation of the Team

"The NFE project began with the visit of a group from the University of Massachusetts in the summer of 1971. The team studied approximately thirty different programs and projects dedicated to out-of-school educational activities. Many conflicts were envisioned in discussing their feasibility. The team felt it was necessary to create and use appropriate technologies within the work context of the organizations themselves. Once the visit was completed an agreement was signed with USAID, the Government of Ecuador, and the Center for International Education of the University of Massachusetts. This contract contemplated the design of and experimentation with a wide variety of approaches to non-formal or out-of-school education" (excerpted from the report presented to the Ministry of Education in 1974).

It is important to note the makeup of the work team. While the group from the University of Massachusetts was in charge of the initial contacts, feasibility studies, and the presentation of proposals, it experienced difficulty because in Ecuador, as in the rest of Latin America, it was a time of much questioning of any foreign presence. This distrust was tinted with nationalistic and revolutionary feelings, where the presence of a "gringo" would give it a taste of having been "made in the United States for Latin America" (James Hoxeng, *Let Jorge Do It*, 1973, p. 22). This led to the project being funded by USAID but with an Ecuadorian director, Patricio Barriga Fuente, whose "actions have been of such high quality," according to Hoxeng, that they deserve national and international recognition. Barriga's training as an economist and educator, and his capacity to interact with campesinos, officials, and representatives of national and foreign bodies and institutions, allowed him to fashion the policies and administration of the NFE project in close coordination with James Hoxeng and the rest of the staff. Amparo

Borja, the secretary, who completed the team, showed much creativity and provided much support. Due to my background as a Quichua campesino and teacher, I also joined the team, along with Carlos Moreno, who had experience as provincial education director. With José Enrique Toaquiza and Pedro Pulupa, we formed the first work team. Undoubtedly, the formation of this intercultural, trilingual, and multidisciplinary team with similar aspirations and directive-administrative capacity strengthened the project.

The participation of foreign professors and students from the University of Massachusetts brought a richness to the experience. Among them the following should be mentioned: David Evans, the main researcher; William Smith, graphic designer and administrator; John Bing, coordinator with the help of Cookie Bourbeau, Valeria Ikis, Jak Gunter, and Jim Fritz. There were various project directors, notably Rodrigo Villacís Molina, who in addition to being one of the directors was the script writer for the *Manuel Santi* photo novel. Marco Encalada also headed the project during the absence of Patricio Barriga.

Many other people participated in the project in one way or another, and all learned so much from it that for some it became one of the main motivations in life, a channel for fulfillment, a guide moving from individual to collective learning and a commitment to the cause of improving humankind and the environment.

The Nature of the Project as it Developed

The multidisciplinary staff did not have academic or professional pretensions, though some were renowned professionals. On the contrary, they were willing to become involved in their own personal growth as well as the group's development. This was characteristic of the NFE project, and a quality that should not go unnoticed, because it was the shape and intention that a work team must adopt to be able to take advantage of the opportunities that appear at each step.

It is possible that this situation may have created some concern in the minds of the funders and others, and it is undeniable that there was a basis for this concern, since the search for equality, fair treatment, liberty, and other legitimate aspirations of any social group involves a commitment and alignment with the neediest people. This attitude is devoid of paternalism and consists of a "walking together" in reciprocity and mutual validation. It results from a dynamic coexistence and the search for the fulfillment of the deeply-felt aspirations of people from the very beginning. Humanistic education obliges one to determine and act along the lines demanded by its beneficiaries.

Since formal education has not, in our view, been responsive to the aspirations of the large majority of the inhabitants of this planet, the NFE alternative was questioned

immediately by those charged with maintaining the status quo. Because NFE approaches end users of education seriously, as the essence and subject of learning and not as inanimate objects, the end users, little by little, are strengthened and become more self-confident and secure. This is the first tangible contrast between NFE and formal education, one that will be the focal theme of the presentations and accounts in this work. In the presentations of participants in NFE, they describe their life experience as characterized by abuse, lack of respect, domination, marginalization, and segregation. One of the values of NFE is its contribution to raising awareness of peoples' capacities and potential, creating spaces for discussion and the formation of a new way of thinking that contributes to the development and progress of their communities.

How Personal Growth Occurred

One of the major results of NFE is that it facilitates the search for thoughtful, organized, and planned liberation, which results from questioning the dominant system in a given place and time. The answers to the question of how personal growth occurred may be found along the path of NFE activities and games. Games make the mind agile, and the simulation games in the NFE project referred to situations that had not traditionally been discussed, obliging people to think about the issues. The market cards allowed people to reflect on and question their unfair treatment under laws that they had no part in enacting. The letter dice were designed to form words with a high social content, and to push people to define the issues and take a stand. Similarly, the seven steps of the Ashton-Warner literacy methodology were tied to Paulo Freire's thinking, which he related in the *Liberation of the Oppressed*.

A Few Facts and Figures

One of the critiques of the formal education system has to do with the points of reference for micro and macro development planning. With other institutions, formal education is used as an instrument for its application. In Ecuador, formal education system planners used statistics and figures of doubtful reliability.

Recently, some university students came to Llano Grande with data taken from the Institute of Statistics and Census, which had established the indigenous population at 5,000. We all knew the real number was higher, due to a census we carried out earlier that year. The official census also stated that about 30 percent of the people were municipal workers, which would mean that all males, regardless of age, would have had to have been municipal workers, since we know that the female population is much larger in our community. Finally, the official census had a long list of surnames such as Ulcuango and

Pumizachos, which do not belong to our community. At one point, the census used the pejorative term *Acapariches* (street sweepers) for municipal workers, when the reality is precisely the reverse. There were so many mistakes in the estimates, that along with the social and historical errors, it was nearly useless.

The former president of Ecuador, Dr. Rodrigo Borja, affirmed during his presidential campaign that he did not believe in statistics. He would say “if in a town there are fifty chickens and the town has two hundred inhabitants, that means that each person would have four chickens to eat according to the statistics. However, they are not aware that the chickens all belong to one owner, who is going to sell them.” In addition, how many times does someone decide to verify the information and correct the statistics?

In “going back to pick up the steps” of NFE (a common phrase among Ecuadorian Indians, which means to deeply and affectionately relive what is theirs at the end of life), we have become aware of how far we have walked. In the provinces of Carchi, Imbabura, Pichincha, Bolívar, Cañar and Azuay, the NFE project carried out pilot tests. Others were carried out in Guayas, Los Ríos, and Esmeraldas, which are coastal provinces. These programs were carried out through agreements with state agencies, military and religious entities, NGOs, federations of campesino organizations, second degree organizations, and with the communities themselves.

However, the data given to the counterparts of the agreement have been quantified only for the provinces of Manabí, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi and Tungurahua, to the end of 1974, with the expectation of the project ending by mid 1976.

	Trained teachers and leaders	Communities involved	Participants in community ctrs.	Campesinos related to the projects
Manabi	100	84	2,400	8,400
Cotopaxi	40	35	1,050	3,800
Chimborazo	97	97	2,900	30,700
Tungurahua	30	30	860	5,200
Total	267	246	7,210	48,100

By the end of 1973, an aggressive expansion of NFE took place in the province of Guayas, in the communities of Colonche, Bambil Collao, Cinchal, and Manglaralto, with community education and development programs responding to the population's own initiatives together with the provincial office. In Chimborazo, work was also carried out with indigenous and mestizo facilitators, through an agreement with the educational

authorities and with the Ecuadorian Volunteer Service. In Azuay, an agreement was reached with the Sayausí high school to create a facilitator formation center. In Manabí and Esmeraldas, toward the end of 1974, it was agreed with the provincial education offices to implement training courses on the use of NFE materials for the entire official teaching staff, which amounted to approximately 1,500 teachers.

Examples of How the Games and NFE Methods Were Applied in Communities and Organizations

The Game of Life

The adaptation and use of the *Game of Life* was inspired by the game of *Monopoly*. It was first called *The Hacienda* and featured many kinds of life situations. This is the major accomplishment of NFE with regards to materials, as was corroborated by its use in Manabí until 1987. The Game of Life promotes dialogue about life itself, but it can also be used to teach letters and numbers. Thus, with the members of FENACOPARR, the National Federation of Rice Growers, in order to play the Game of Life, they needed first to learn how to read the cards and write down the results. At the same time, they became aware of the influence of the market, of the environment, of organization, and the role played by the bank as a source of credit and economic control. Twenty years ago this did not have much importance in the rural sector, but it is fundamental today. A campesino on a visit to Santa Lucía made this clear when he said, “one can even lose one’s life on this.”

Payments, credits, transactions, and restrictions both in private and state banks require a lot of knowledge, even for small farmers, but these institutions offer workers and producers very little help. The tools used by NFE were ahead of their time: since becoming aware of them twenty years ago they became aware of this situation, which will benefit campesinos when they move from awareness to action.

The Cooperative Game

Games about cooperatives helped build understanding and correct the makeup of the cooperatives. Studies show that cooperatives can create elites and power groups at the leadership level. In many cases there is embezzlement and other forms of corruption. Through this game, consciousness was raised about the responsibility of everyone involved at the leadership level, including those involved in auditing the business. This is particularly important in the rural sector, where friendship and sharing make cooperatives an option, but not one without danger.

Silvia Ashton-Warner Literacy Method

In populations with a high rate of illiteracy, such as the provinces of Cotopaxi, Imbabura, Cañar, Azuay, and Esmeraldas, the seven steps of the methodology adapted by Ashton-Warner were applied with support from the provincial Departments of Adult Education. The intention of this methodology was to find, based on dialogue and the discussion of real situations, words that would generate awareness of latent problems. These “code” words would then be broken down into syllables. Using the parts and joining them together, participants would then form new words. All of these words were rooted in understanding, and their use and handling was learned based on a deep sense of ownership of “their word.”

Sharing words so close to one’s self and with such a deep feeling of ownership, defining them, breaking them down, and restructuring them into other words helped learners to grow, share, and teach each other on an equal, one-to-one basis. Thus, literacy became a resource through which the campesino could learn to deal with elements, resources, and persons, become aware of his or her own growth as well as that of the surrounding group.

It is worth noting that the adaptation of both the Game of Life and the Silvia Ashton-Warner method were the result of James Hoxeng’s efforts with support from the team. The seven-step method has had surprising results due to the short time required for nonreaders to learn. We will see how each one of the participants of the central team helped shape NFE.

Formal vs. Non-Formal Education

In comparison with the cold, imposed way of learning of formal education during the first years of school, this dynamic way of learning appealed to both grownups and children. Children became helpers and guides to their parents and grandparents. Children liked getting involved in the meetings, dramas, visits to places and people, and slide shows, and were filled with happiness and playfulness. This fundamental aspect of education is often disregarded in formal education systems, especially in rural areas. Later, through the Children Centers program, children were able to partially achieve their aspiration of learning in a relaxed environment.

Education shared and supported by the campesinos themselves resulted in learners, sharers, and supporters of this endeavor. This appealed to and spread among the people, although the traditional teachers looked askance at the process. With their vague knowledge of NFE, they resisted and considered these “informal and disrespectful” activities threatening. This was the first obstacle that had to be overcome. Later, after seeing the enthusiastic level of campesino participation, these people were nostalgic about NFE,

since “it makes them more human” they say, though still with prejudice toward campesinos.

Environments where NFE Takes Place

NFE can happen in any environment that allows interaction: in borrowed classrooms, houses, church entrances, corners of parks, river banks, or under a big tree. People would gather to play *Market Cards*, analyzing prices of staple foods and sharing methods, sources, and advantages of different crop production.

“Those Pieces of Wood and Cardboard with Numbers and Letters”

The dice with letters would change hands in the groups, and with satisfaction on their faces they would exchange words, surprised that they could express their names and names of things and towns with letters. With help from those who knew more, they put into practice teaching by learning and learning by teaching.

Once the day’s work was over, everyone was called for an afternoon of *Bingo* with letters. They were given cards on which each letter was covered with a kernel of corn or a bean as the names of the letters were called out. In this way, the special shape of each letter was learned. Children would eagerly play with parents, and in healthy competition everybody would discuss if such and such a word that appeared on some card was bad, or if the people were the ones who were thinking wrong when a word called “bad” would appear. Women carrying their babies on their backs, husbands beside their wives, all played enthusiastically until “everybody was so tired of winning they had to go home to rest,” according to Ramón Valdivieso from the Chimborazo province.

Dramas and Picture Stories

For any reason at all and in the spirit of celebration, the “Day of the One-Act Farce” was organized and given this name because of the dramas that were prepared to entertain the people during the evening. After having read the picture stories of *Manuel Santi* and assigning roles to the actors, they would practice again and again in order to give a good presentation and reflect on the message of the stories with the people who attended. Once the presentations ended, other people would agree to prepare for the next meeting.

The “Bibliobus”

These actions, which grew out of the initiative of the communities themselves, inspired another program, the “Bibliobus.” It took place in the provinces of Chimborazo and Tungurahua in 1974, and its impact will be explained later. A valuable vehicle not being

put to good use was rescued from a garage of the Ministry of Education. It was a bus-type vehicle that had its own electric generator, lights, speakers, projection equipment, traveling library, printing press, and other equipment, and could transport personnel prepared to stay in the countryside for long periods. The “Bibliobus” became the modern version of the minstrel show, moving from town to town groups of musicians, actors, and newspaper publishers. It served to motivate and spread the idea that the learning process can be initiated anywhere. It promoted and supported the Popular Culture Centers devoted to literacy teaching, developing survival skills, putting democracy into practice by assembling people, using parliamentary procedures, making decisions based on priorities, motivating towards achieving success, and in general, educating individuals about their communities and natural environment.

Puppets, Big Heads, and Masks

The use of puppets was also a success. People learned everything from how to make them to how to set up a stage, prepare dialogues, outline the arguments, make the issues of common interest their own, give presentations, and share their lives using this highly creative and innovative instrument. By using puppets, the facilitators, the staff at the central offices, and the campesinos themselves lost their inhibitions and meetings would end with delightful feedback for the program. The “big heads,” nothing more than giant balloons with faces, and the masks had great acceptance among the people and were part of the learning resources of the method.

Co-Participation with Institutions

There were two stages during which contact with the NGOs and governmental organizations was strong, first when the program needed to be promoted, and later when the instruments needed to be tested. To get people interested in the program, sites were explored, some were selected, and followup and evaluation provided the criteria for continuing in several provinces and communities. When the instruments and methods proved suitable, a task accomplished through the governmental education departments in several provinces and the National Service for Teaching Resources (SEANRED), the use of those instruments and methods was extended to other provinces of the country, especially Esmeraldas, Los Ríos, and Bolívar.

The instruments were tested and the materials were published by agreements in certain cases or voluntarily in others as with the Ecuadorian Volunteer Service, the Ecuadorian Center for Agricultural Services (CESA), cooperatives, and governmental organizations such as the Ministry of Agriculture, and different departments of the

Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Health. As a result of these agreements, the originality of the instruments, and the effectiveness of the activities, they were widely accepted and the program became known at a national level. However, we soon realized that some of these cooperating agencies had motives other than the benefit of campesinos. This was confirmed by later research and was one of the causes of the project's termination.

Visits and Perspectives of NFE

At the international level, we received visits from students of the counterpart institution and of other people who wished to see the practical results. We received the support of students of the University of Massachusetts, exchanged speakers, and encouraged the writing and publication of papers and theses regarding the experience in Ecuador. The NFE experience in Ecuador was communicated through magazine and newspaper articles (although there has been less interest in the fate of the Ecuadorian facilitators and communities).

Adaptation, Creation, and Recovery of Games and Educational Materials

The team's work methods with the communities gave good results. An important example is the application of the Game of Life, whose success resulted from the dedicated and persistent work of the teams in Ecuador and of the University of Massachusetts. It is only one example of the process that was followed that led to the final product, beginning with its physical presentation on paper, or folding cardboard up, or making it out of wood, with cards and chips made from durable materials. This same process was followed with the other materials, including the Market Game, fluency and simulation games, dice with letters, cards, and Bingo.

During the key year of the NFE project, 1972, other projects were also started, one of these being radio. Through Radio Mensaje of Cayambe, Father Isaías Barriga permitted the testing of an interactive radio project with campesinos. The test was conducted by James Hoxeng, who had created this educational approach. Planning and implementation of the project is explained in detail in the book *Let Jorge Do It*, and jointly with the radio programs in Cotopaxi, it is one of the main programs that is still being broadcast.

On Radio Mensaje, reporter and announcer Ramón Quilumbaquín has analyzed and disseminated information on the work done with NFE in the 1970s and has testified to the usefulness of the programs created by the project. The first tests were made in Tabacundo, where we worked in a trustful environment that has continued to this day. The test programs were transformed into programs suitable for other communities and

supported the development of broad campesino sectors. Elements and activities finally converged at Radio Mensaje of the Casa Campesina in Cayambe, where the radio was finally installed (this is explained later).

In addition to these activities there were others that, although smaller, proved to be very useful. Such was the case of “Radio Visión” that broadcast cassette recordings accompanied by posters with representative drawings that a trained facilitator could use to guide the learning process.

The radio stories that were created with characters such as “Hugo Candelario” for the coast and “Pedro Remache” for the highlands are classic examples of radio programs given wide use. The plots of the stories were based on the daily life of two characters, who were common although special people, and who lived the conflicts brought about by their growth as leaders and by taking a stand in personal and community life. These stories, especially on the coast, are still being broadcast in the Province of Manabí. They are presented chapter by chapter in a way similar to many popular radio programs.

In addition to the long programs, short radio messages were broadcast with simple ideas spoken by campesino facilitators. These spots could be heard on portable cassette recorders or on local radio stations. People would stop what they were doing to listen to the messages and discuss and reflect on the problems presented. They were produced to imitate the style used by commercials, which by constant repetition introduced themselves into the daily lives of the people, especially the young. The messages had to do with social issues, beauty, food, market prices, music, art, tastes, communication, and memory.

As mentioned previously, at FENACOPARR horizontal relations were established first. This is understandable because of the nature of the members, the majority of whom were rice workers. Their leaders, who had been chosen from within the group, had no bureaucratic vices or negative attitudes. On the contrary, their cordiality led to an easy introduction of NFE activities. According to the needs of the group, reading, writing, and market-related materials were tested and used. Discussion continued on the abuses of middlemen, market variability, crops, and political issues. One factor that guaranteed the project’s success was the organization’s force and unity, giving it access to extensive agriculture areas with the consent and support of the members. All of this allowed expectations to be completely fulfilled.

The Facilitators—Special People Who Should Be Recognized

The role of the facilitators should be analyzed, although throughout this paper the relationship between the NFE project life and the training and activities of the facilitators

is constantly mentioned. Growth of the facilitators guaranteed the project's goals in the here and now. We insisted that the facilitators should be recognized and given a "degree" or "certificate," because they were the force behind NFE. The project indeed recognized them, although not with degrees, and began providing them with 100 sucres for their hard work, which was divided between leading the NFE centers and their own development.

During the process, facilitators faced serious conflicts. What they knew was not enough for what was needed, so they learned more, relating to all kinds of people to resolve their own and other people's conflicts, both individual and collective, and, in the end, to be a force for development. Unfortunately, some of them did not continue on the road and decided to avoid responsibilities, although today they know that being a facilitator is important and demands sacrifice and that it is also gratifying to see their people progress.

We approached the communities with the premise that we would find people interested in learning, participating, and growing with their communities. Only the following requirements were established to select facilitators: that the community discuss and choose the candidates, that they be over 18 years of age, be a member of the community, be communicative, want to learn, be able to deal with people, like to teach, have the temperament of a leader, and be accepted by the community.

These people became central to the NFE activities. They were both channels and catalysts. As their critical thinking skills grew, they were more able to apply, expand, and sustain campesino education. The training and presence of facilitators was questioned by envious teachers in the official education system who believed that they posed a threat to the profession and who obstructed certain privileges. They were partly right to think that way, since the mere presence of facilitators brought to light some of the many immoralities, abuses, and even crimes that needed to be detected, judged, and punished, or misconduct that needed to be corrected through dialogue with the teachers.

Living Laboratory for Facilitators

The issue of the facilitators, their training, their life, and their permanence should be analyzed. This is why they are frequently mentioned throughout this paper. In the first place, what is important is the local environment where the person grows and, little by little, changes to become committed to the people of his or her community, other nearby communities, and even to actors at the national and international level.

This could appear as an exaggeration to those who have limited experience with campesinos, mestizos, indigenous, and black people who today make up what are called

“native peoples.” This word bothers some people. This is ignorance, and it exists in all environments, at lower social levels as well as at the highest intellectual levels. This is why it is necessary for us to approach the issue of the experiential “closed” workshops as a mechanism for facilitators’ training.

In the world of business, large sums of money are invested in training employees in order to achieve greater profits for the enterprises. NFE incorporated several business practices, such as working in a comfortable environment that has the necessary services to carry out seminars and workshops for periods from three to fifteen days. Preparation of the training program that was proposed by the people in charge was discussed and a consensus was reached with the participants.

The candidates that were chosen to go to a workshop in representation of their communities lived new experiences that ranged from being away from their community for several days, which they were not used to doing, to sharing the process with people from other geographical and social backgrounds. The resources used during training (dynamic exercises, group work, long discussion meetings, games, and dramas) allowed individuals to grow, beginning with self-appreciation and appreciation of others through living in a “learning community.” Each exercise or activity could be used in the communities. For this reason, what the facilitators learned was in turn taught to their fellow community members after they returned.

These workshops were closed, or residential, in order to draw the participants away from their daily tasks so they could reflect on development issues. This had not been possible previously, because they were busy with their heavy daily work loads or because they had no opportunity to discuss such issues in their communities. The NFE project planned its work in such a way that permanent attendance of the facilitator candidates at these “retreats” was guaranteed, not to deny them the freedom they have in their communities or their eagerness to learn and live the experience, but to treat them in the way entrepreneurial employers treat their employees, the difference being that the exercises and dynamics were designed for personal and collective growth, not to benefit “the company” as in the world of business.

In addition to learning how to teach reading and writing, how to conduct meetings and solve problems, and how to interact with organizations from outside their communities, they learned how to share with their new colleagues. By sharing a common goal they were strengthened and able to work for their communities.

At the end of this training course, facilitators were given the task of planning how to face the powerful forces that predominated in their communities. They had acquired a

profound sense of needing to participate in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of the country. They could strengthen the knowledge of the people and defend their interests by attracting agencies and actors of change, thus contributing to community and family improvement.

The facilitators put participatory democracy into practice in a “living laboratory” prepared for this purpose. This laboratory is the place where the facilitators test themselves and others, in contrast to other laboratories where people are dissected like guinea pigs. In this environment, the facilitators are subjects of history, having analyzed their lives, given them value and reprogrammed their lives to benefit themselves and others, now working with forces and institutions in their communities.

The Transcendence of the Facilitators

It should be said that the NFE project fell short of its initial goal to be a testing ground for the application of learning materials and techniques to improve education. Instead, it took on the messianic challenge of modeling the being, the human person, the manager, the person who has so much to share from his or her inside world, who questions his or her education and, above all, who analyzes its implications for life.

Facilitators ask themselves why things are the way they are, the meaning of religions, myths, and legends, how the world and the universe were created, and the causes and the origins of things. From the innocence that surrounds them in the environment, they reach up to question what is wrong and how things should be, and when they find the possibility of solving some problem at hand, they do not hesitate to act with confidence. The person who once becomes a facilitator can never stop being one.

Organizations that Made Use of the NFE Experience

The relationship with the NGO Ecuadorian Volunteer Service (SEV) allowed NFE from its beginning to take part in the training of Quichua leaders in Cachisagua through processes that unfortunately were never free of vertical positions on the part of SEV staff. In spite of using the term *compañeros* (fellows or colleagues), they harbored feelings of superiority deep inside, since they were from the city and were “prepared,” as campesinos would say. All of this has been proven in this study. After the project terminated they never returned to the communities and the facilitators have not forgotten this.

The SEV worked in Chimborazo and Azuay. In these provinces the differences were radical. In Azuay, work was carried out with conviction, even more, with commitment. In the case of Chimborazo, the SEV volunteers were professionals, teachers, and univer-

sity graduates who had not found work in any other place. Therefore, they organized this group to contribute to the development of the campesinos. However, the “termites of bureaucracy” undermined them up to the point that today they no longer exist.

Intermediate and Long Term Results

The achievements of campesino education, training, health, and organization are praiseworthy and at least leave the door open for the development efforts of institutions. One of the long term results is the continued participation of community leaders in the Ecuadorian Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE), an organization recognized throughout South America and by other class organizations practicing democratic participation.

The facilitators and leaders that were trained in these activities show a clear spirit of defense and struggle for their people. They are dynamic and participate with a high degree of awareness in movements to restore and maintain democracy and justice.

Great efforts were made to coordinate activities, mainly with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Most activities were coordinated with its departments, and reports on the achieved results were submitted, complying with legal requirements. Coordination with other official organizations was somewhat more circumstantial. For example, an agreement was established with the Ministry of Defense to train conscripts, who are obligated to serve for one year as literacy teachers. The intention was for them to apply the skills learned upon returning to their communities. This made sense, since men who are drafted are generally from poor places far from the cities. Cooperation was also established with the Ministry of Health to train part of its bureaucratic staff. The learning technique used was to work with officials and campesinos who were brought to the city to help doctors understand how to work in rural areas. The methods, including use of puppets, were effective.

Whenever the progress of the NFE project so required, works of infrastructure were built in response to the petitions from facilitators, leaders, and organizations by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Public Works. This happened in Colonche, Manglaralto, Cinchal, Loma Alta, and in other coastal and highland communities. With these activities, the demand for public works grew. Insistence on compliance was frequent in the campesino areas, and the authorities became worried about having so many demands, all at the same time and from so many different places in the country—so much so that the Colonche NFE team was summoned by the Guayas province governor’s office and held there for several hours while investigations were underway about campesino demonstrations that had taken place in Guayaquil. Through the practice of

encouraging self-management and project prioritization, we had reached the mecca of bureaucratic practice in Guayaquil.

This was another result of NFE in Ecuador. These self-managing, struggling, enterprising, democratic, and participatory efforts for social justice and companionship will never stop being an integral part of all of us who have been involved in NFE.

Non-Formal Education...At the End of the Agreement

This document is the continuation of several unpublished documents and other widely circulated reports that sometimes have not mentioned their sources or their specific experiences. To close the program in Ecuador, legal stipulations established that all project goods should pass to national counterparts. The vehicles of the department of studies were given to the Provincial Educational Departments of Chimborazo. However, Carlos Moreno kept a vehicle and the NFE contacts for a long time, since he cooperated with the Interamerican Foundation. This allowed him to continue followup in the indigenous communities of Chimborazo, although to a lesser degree.

Another vehicle was given to the Educational Department of Cotopaxi. In that province, however, the vehicle was immediately assigned to department officials without any thought for continuing the project. A vehicle was also given to an institution on the coast and another vehicle to the Ministry of Education in Pichincha, where an official used it until it was auctioned off.

During the project period, the main office in Quito as well as the offices that were gradually opened in the provinces were furnished with file cabinets, bookcases, desks and other furniture, tools, cassette recorders, slide projectors, video recorders, typewriters, portable broadcasting equipment, and other supplies.

Through an agreement under the NFE project, SENARED, of the Ministry of Education and Culture, published many of the simulation and fluency materials and instructions on how to use the games and picture stories. The Out-of-School Education Department was abundantly provided with these materials as well as the booklet *I Can Too (Yo También Puedo)*, published by USAID), picture stories and instruction booklets, dice with and without letters, complete Market Game cards, The Game of Life with all the components, traveling theaters and puppets, all inherited in the name of being the counterpart under the agreement. However, the same did not occur with the campesinos; nothing was given to the real NFE actors. "We saw the things going by over our heads; from paper clips to vehicles, which later ended up in personal use, all were distributed among themselves," said one of the facilitators. The impression was that everything disappeared immediately, especially the material things. In those days the military offi-

cials that had been running the government were changed, and governmental priorities did not allow the excitement that had been created through NFE to continue.

Mesías Silva emphatically expressed that “nobody that formerly had been going regularly to the communities ever visited them again, and people could not understand the reason, since during the time of the project they were almost as close as brothers. The same happened with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the SEV volunteers in Chimborazo, the NGOs, and other organizations; no one ever returned to the communities.” “Don Misho,” as he was affectionately called, once severely rebuked a SEV ex-volunteer for not having returned to Tutupala. Don Misho believed, therefore, that the concept of companionship had been exploited and betrayed.

Information Used and Work Done by the Research Team

The support team based its research on the following documents: *La Educación No Formal en el Ecuador en los Años 1971 a 1975*, written through the NFE project for the Ministry of Education; the book *Let Jorge Do It*, by James Hoxeng, translated to Spanish by Elena Donoso; *Educación Formal, Para Qué?*, by Patricio Barriga; *Informe de Educación No Formal*, unpublished; and *Manual del Facilitador*, by Enrique Tasiguano Muzo in 1997 and translated into English. The Technical Notes produced by the central office and written by students and teachers of the University of Massachusetts and the staff in Quito were also used, as well as reports and evaluations that still exist in NFE files in Ecuador.

Survival of Life

During the workshop on research support information, the documents of the five-year plan (1973 to 1977) were analyzed. This plan was first implemented as a pilot project and then was issued as policy. Emphasis was put on a “nuclear” approach, a philosophy that intended to incorporate campesinos and promote informal leadership through educational activities. From the very beginning, it was hard to maintain the original idea, since making regular teachers responsible for NFE can only induce returning to the vertical system of learning. Applying a law or regulation will not change the behavior of the people in charge of education; they simply continue giving vertical orders.

The educational nuclei claimed to respond to “especially the remote areas of rural populations that live in deplorable economic conditions, following the principles of a liberating social philosophy and scientific pedagogy...” (*Report on Operational Seminar–Course on Nuclearizing*, 1978, p. 5). This excellent rhetoric is justified; indeed, Milton Cisneros participated in the planning. He was the national counterpart in the agreement

between the University of Massachusetts and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The results of NFE were the compelling cause to take campesinos and their organizations into account. It was a triumph, since they responded to the basic categories stated as: community participation, study plans, training, community organization and management, and interinstitutional and interdisciplinary coordination (*Report*, p. 12).

Similarly, the proposal of CONSUDEC, an education consulting organization, supported the NFE idea in *General Education Project* (1975, p. 71) for the popular radio schools of Ecuador. The authors, Galo Pozo Almeida, a consultant to CEMA and the NFE project, and Jorge Rivera Pizarro, state NFE's philosophy and vindicate the presence and validity of the facilitators in education through radio broadcasting. To put this into practice they had Edgar Jácome, an expert consultant, train the radio station personnel.

Another result, and perhaps one of the most important, is what is now happening in Manabí. NFE's survival takes an official form there within the activities of the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Popular Education and New Cultural Trend programs. The latter is a new program inspired by what was done with the Bibliobus in encouraging cultural survival.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION TODAY

Once the basic information was analyzed, the research team for this report went to the field to contact the campesinos directly. In this paper, we present the impressions either of the whole team or of the individuals. On some occasions stories will be repeated, because the impressions of each person on the research team occasionally differed. The impressions will be followed by analysis.

During the research stage the team got fully involved in all steps: preparation, contact with the people, explanations, preparation of meetings, and visits to the places where NFE had been applied. The team carried out group and individual surveys. Their participation in all events, with the facilitators of the coast and the highlands, allowed them to win the confidence of the people and learn the situation of NFE as it is today. The valuable and recoverable aspects of this experience are divided into two areas: facilitators and the learning resources and certain programs that still exist.

Facilitators

The facilitators kept the ideas of NFE alive, thanks to having been trained in this campesino school. In addition to the criteria for choosing and finding suitable people to work in the NFE project, I believe their eagerness to learn and their openness created a force that allowed the formation of this valuable actor in society.

The permanence and survival of the facilitators strongly contrasts with the abrupt termination of the project. The then-cooperating organizations did not take campesinos into account at all in the formulation of education policies that directly affected their future, with the exception of those that were established to respond to proposals such as the radio programs and the Campesino Children Centers of FODERUMA.

Those who survived the adversity committed themselves to the cause of their fellows and found a purpose in their lives. They have struggled and taken advantage of the openings in the formal structure, such as the training activities carried out by the government to upgrade and graduate the informal teachers. This opportunity was immediately taken by facilitators, and today 90 percent of those from Manabí are adult educators, teachers, supervisors, university professors, and directors of technical schools. In the highlands, the majority of people who today work at the National Bilingual Intercultural Education Department (DINEIB) of the Ministry of Education and Culture were the NFE facilitators of yesterday. Their capacity to discern, participate and commit themselves is a serious support for this educational and cultural organization.

Another relevant aspect is that bilingualism in education was practiced and strengthened in the 1970s through application of NFE. This is now the central concern of

DINEIB and of other autochthonous organizations that defend the rights of indigenous people.

The facilitators go unnoticed by a society that, immersed in extraneous values, is not capable of finding and acknowledging their real value. If a society is not capable of valuing itself, it is even less able to value the campesinos. However, the protagonists of the disenchantment and paralysis of progress continue waiting for “supermen” to solve their problems and make them happy.

The NFE facilitators are people like Eufemia Lara, who in spite of “having nothing or hardly anything” have contributed positively to history with courage and determination, and with capability in many fields as well as in resolving their personal problems. Eufemia Lara says that one day, as she was passing by a small quarry, she had the idea of starting a block-making project. She went to work, rented a piece of land, formed work groups, and implemented a pressed cement and gravel block factory through *mingas* or collective work. In recalling this episode, she says “the truth is that I don’t know how I calculated what was needed and how I did the other necessary things..., but everybody helped and we all completed the work.” The first income exceeded 120,000 sucres and it was a relief to have been able to pass the self-management test and do the things that were done, she said with emotion. After that, things seemed easier for her, since she had overcome her fear and felt more capable and useful to society.

In Tutupala, Mesías Silva tells of his satisfaction at having harvested 10,000 eucalyptus trees that the community planted in 1976 at the end of the NFE project. He was responsible for finding the land for the plantation as well as for caring for the trees for years. These trees represent an income of not less than 15 million sucres, and Mesías has looked for the other people that worked in this project. Some of them have died, and “their relatives cannot believe that they received money from something that the deceased person did a long time ago.” In addition to being a leader in Tutupala, Mesías Silva has a sawmill in Guano where he completes the production cycle, planting and caring for the trees, and cutting and selling the wood. His entrepreneurial capacity is a result, he said with contentment, of the NFE project, which “one day appeared in the communities of San Isidro, Balzayán and San Andrés.”

Ernestina Martínez, now a facilitator, was taught by another facilitator, Eufemia Lara. From her she learned how to struggle untiringly and by herself to sustain her three children. Full of emotion, she tells us that during her lifetime she has done many things, from being a janitor of a school, a sewing teacher at the same school and, after she had taken some accelerated courses and obtaining her degree, a teacher. At the same time she

sold clothes that she made, “in spite of the snide looks of those who cannot believe that we campesinos know better than they how to defend ourselves,” she says.

Marcelino Yuquilema, a minstrel, an artist, and an exponent of culture, brings people together with a harp he has made by himself. He also knows how to weave the typical ponchos of Cacha and San Juan and is a supervisor of the local schools. In other words, he is a messenger of NFE. He is a simple and calm person, but very perceptive and without resentment. He walks miles and miles to get to the indigenous schools to “non-formally” project and plan creative and manual activities with the children and to get commitment from the parents by making them participants in the results.

José Antonio Shagñay, a facilitator of Pulucate, is the prototypical Indian who, above all, worried about studying and studying until he became the director of a campesino high school. Without leaving his campesino essence behind, he teaches in Quichua the values of life: to defend the land and ecology and to love the earth and culture. On that basis he plans productive activities with his students. A lover and “supporter of his family,” he hopes that we will not lose the thread of NFE.

Rogelio Inca, an Indian of Sicalpa, is eager to use NFE materials and resources in the school he directs, and comments that what he learned as a facilitator is what has remained and guided him in his professional and personal behavior.

In Azuay, after the NFE project ended, several conflicts over power, guidelines, philosophy, practice, and ideological positioning forced Pepe Huashima to resign from his teaching position at the Sayausí school, although not from the work in his native town. In his life and work in Jima, he has brought people together and organized a print shop, which is at the service of his people, “the poor and needy, as all are in these times of the Abucaramato.”

We also know what has happened with the facilitators from the coast, who are all still involved in education. They have experienced difficult times because of having criticized formal education, due in the first place to their preparation as facilitators and after that from their bad experience of learning little in high school and university classrooms. Lenin Moreira is working at the Popular Education Supervisory Office of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and at the Manabita newspaper. Carlos Avellán is a university professor and Director of the Zone Education Unit. He has been involved in magazine production, is a writer, a poet, and a politician who made it to mayor, “but above all [I am] a facilitator, my greatest pride.”

Those working as principals or vice principals in rural schools or in the cantons and parochial districts, Miguel Cedeño, Violeta Chica, José Pozo, and as teachers—Espíritu

García, Ramón Salazar, among others—decided to form an NFE organization to continue with the work and the “beneficial characteristics of this type of education that formed part of our lives,” in the words of facilitator César Vélez Verduga, a current official of the Ministry of Education and president of clubs and associations.

NFE Materials and Resources

The final destination of the materials given to institutions was sad: in some cases they were left in storage for a long time and in others we do not know what happened to them. The investigators were able to verify that the institutions that acted as counterparts for the University of Massachusetts were apparently more interested in the funds than in the materials, since they always believed more in their own methodologies and materials. With these arguments, enormous amounts of money have been wasted. It is only in Manabí that all of the materials continued to be used through 1988.

The photo novel magazines and stories survived, so much so that Unesco has been interested in producing more of them in Manabí. This was the motive for the Bahía de Caráquez meeting held in mid February 1998. Facilitator Violeta Chica declared that “the invitation and organization of the event was self-managed and funded.”

The materials and resources that have been most popular as the most attractive and innovative were those that can be handled in some way. William Smith’s pamphlets were especially successful. In a complete and meticulous way, he included motivating phrases and messages that guided participants and contained expressions that we continue to use in presenting materials in different gatherings today.

Radio Programs

Radio programs are what have lasted the longest and still have a certain future, particularly in rural areas. The approach used with the Radio Booths in Latacunga, Cotopaxi, was also very much used by bilingual educators, particularly in Zumbagua. This supported and helped perfect an idea that has now become part of the philosophy of radio stations at the grass roots level.

Radio Mensaje of Cayambe, which is currently directed by Father Javier Herrán is one consequence of initial activities in this area. Along with the programs in Tabacundo, it offers good support to rural people. Likewise, Roberto Vacancela, a reporter for the Chimborazo radio schools is aware of how much is owed to NFE, both in the training of personnel as well as in the project’s programs and activities that use the NFE approach. In our visits to the communities, he accompanied us and encouraged this work of revival.

Mention must also be made of facilitators Agustín Chela of Cachizagua, and Rogelio Bastidas, two people who moved away from their original homes to establish themselves in new communities. The first lives in Puerto Quito and the second in La Maná. Both say they are facilitators in their new environments and that the life improvement skills learned have helped them in this difficult task. Each leads local organizations of fellow colonists and is dedicated to work in agriculture as well as in forming work groups. Agustín and Rogelio are very much aware of the problems of life, which is particularly important, being far from their previous homes.

***Huahua Huasis* or Campesino Childcare Centers**

The history of NFE has repeated itself with the creation of the campesino child care centers that were born with FODERUMA (Marginal Rural Development Fund), an Ecuadorian Central Bank program implemented from 1978 to 1992. FODERUMA was established exclusively to assist vulnerable marginal campesinos. The NFE program complemented reimbursable and nonreimbursable grants in those places where Ecuador's Central Bank program was applied.

Application of NFE methodology resulted in a beneficial program of fourteen years duration, during which all that was done with NFE was corroborated by the creation of the office for campesino child care centers or *Huahua Huasis*. Through community and promoter selection, community training for long periods in closed quarters, the use of simple local materials, the practice of creativity and management capacity, self-evaluation, group work skills, knowledge of group dynamics, and the awareness that learning resources are unlimited, etc., these centers allowed the reproduction of the experience for the benefit of marginal communities, for keeping in contact with the communities, and for sharing their life, customs, dreams, and perspectives for the future.

At the end of 1988, the program had 145 campesino promoters of basic education, 202 trained promoters, 11 campesino coordinators in charge of followup and control of the campesino child care centers, and 11 professionals on the technical team, all working in the provinces of Esmeraldas, Manabí, Guayas, Los Ríos, Azuay, Chimborazo, and Cotopaxi.

Information from 1992 shows some substantial changes that had taken place:

Provinces attended—9

(Azuay, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, Imbabura, Guayas, Los Ríos, Manabí, El Oro, Esmeraldas)

Centers attended—126

Centers built exclusively for campesino child care centers—48

Trained promoters of the campesino child care centers—218

Number of children cared for—5,340

Campesino coordinators—18

Technical support staff—4

Considering that at the beginning of 1979 there were only 13 campesino child care centers, 22 promoters, and 386 children under age 6 being cared for, it is clear that the program has grown enormously. Moreover, response to many petitions was not possible because of the lack of resources, because they were included in other FODERUMA projects, or because the program was near its termination.

It is necessary to keep in mind that during the entire process, work was done with the criteria of recovering and educating potential leaders and promoters, so much so that in 1988 when the number of technical staff (eleven) was proportionately greater than the growth rate of promoters and leaders, the technical team was drastically reduced to four persons who were exclusively in charge of guiding early stimulation techniques and not involved in community life or decisions. This is only one example of the attention that was given to campesino child care centers and the community.

NFE methodology was unique in responding to campesinos' needs in the child care centers. School teachers had fewer problems with their students, since the children had previously been prepared for learning in those "sui generis" centers. Budgeted resources and real support for productive projects and community infrastructure helped guarantee success.

Campesinos throughout Ecuador were enthusiastic about FODERUMA, and child care centers lived their golden age up to the moment that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank conditioned external aid on having Ecuador's Central Bank returning to its simple monetary activities. Since the Central Bank manages financial resources for the whole country, it was able to allot 1 percent of the income generated by oil production to FODERUMA. Thus, FODERUMA's death came by international decree. Protests by poor people had no effect.; external conditionality was more powerful. Child care centers also began taking part in the overall demands for redistribution of the country's wealth, and FODERUMA was accused of being rebellious. Institutional termination of NFE and campesino child care centers during their best time shows once again how campesinos are disregarded.

CONCLUSIONS

Undoubtedly, NFE reached its highest point in the work of the facilitators and their efforts in practical training through the two-week retreats. Results were the long lasting positive changes in people and, through them, in the communities.

The simple materials produced were accepted and used by official educators, but neither campesinos nor authorities have promoted creating, reproducing, or supporting their use except in Manabí.

Radio programs, although not structured as they used to be, have followed the same philosophy in which campesinos manage them, produce their materials, and are nourished by the experiences of NFE.

One humanistic advance achieved was the leveling of human relations: the companionship experienced in the NFE project was deeper than any of its secondary meanings, and did away with dependence, domination, abuse, and prepotency. It was a result that has helped people face life. This positive attitude is transmitted from generation to generation. It provides self-respect and helps people feel secure and identify with their own culture. Strengthening of personality has made room for the education of leaders, who are the endogenous promoters of development, trainers of their fellows, and links to the outside world. However, this in itself has been a cause for closing programs through unfounded fears.

Leaders that have been educated now represent their communities in political spheres and were active in overthrowing Bucaram's government. Their role in a real democracy bodes well for the communities that have always been dominated. This potential as a redeeming force has been ignored by the many development programs and organizations working in rural areas.

The continuation of NFE became evident in the *Huahua Huasis* of FODERUMA in 1978. After this experience and with people educated through the child care centers, the government organized the Community Network, which cared for poor children under 6 years of age for the first time. The next government, antagonistic to the previous one, terminated this program and created the Organization for Children's Rescue, a picturesque title, but it has now been accused of misappropriation of funds and of not "rescuing" even a single child.

NFE is also part of the approach followed by COMUNIDEC, an NGO established by Carlos Moreno, that has applied the experiences of NFE very effectively.

Recommendations

Considering the overall situation of marginal peoples who are at risk—the majority of the world's population, it would be expedient to:

- ▶ Recover NFE as a program that has proved effective and committed to the interests of marginal people. It should be improved and implemented as a central element of all development programs through broad discussion at national and international levels.
- ▶ Overcome the point of view that marginal people are only subjects for research. Give credit to those who for historical reasons do not have professional degrees. Their roles as facilitators will always surpass the system's encouragement of complacency and will be more in tune with real needs and with nature. If professional degrees are really a problem, we should move toward recognizing and providing degrees for those who indeed deserve them so they can face the system and control the proliferation of those who are frequently working among the poor although not entitled to their degrees.
- ▶ Today 75 percent of Ecuador's population is urban, and consequently people have lost their cultural identity and moral values. Society is disintegrating, the economy is declining, and basic needs are increasingly left unattended. It is imperative to strengthen “popular” education, for which NFE could be a valuable tool. Once started, it will not end.
- ▶ In operational terms, it is necessary to create centers where, with the participation of the people through their facilitators, strategies can be discussed and designed to both prevent and face the evils of the twenty-first century: corruption, ecological damage, disease, hunger, misery, and disregard for the poor.
- ▶ Polan Laki, who works at FAO's Regional Agriculture Education and Extension Office, has said that more critical than insufficient resources is their misuse (*Redes de Cooperación Técnica*, “Soluciones Simples para Problemas Complejos”, p. 5). Therefore, it is necessary to foresee and control how resources in all spheres of education are being used, since we are continuously losing ground, not having applied the results, the simplicity, the importance, and the pleasure of NFE.
- ▶ Include in state policies the right of poor people to education, by allocating resources and training, and hiring suitable staff for campesino education, establishing centers, and being vigilant about the fulfillment of local aspirations.
- ▶ Form commissions with direct participation of campesinos to discuss, plan, and submit proposals on the appropriateness of NFE to the authorities of each geographical area or at the national levels.
- ▶ Centralize information and create a data base to rapidly inform the network about events, meetings, and workshops, and to dynamically promote NFE.

EPILOGUE: SEQUENCE OF OBSERVATIONS REGARDING NFE

To finish writing a paper is like pruning a tree in full production: its fruit, both large and small, are still fruit, and no one can assert that they are small or useless, or that because they are big they are the best. Clarita Zambrano, a promoter-facilitator at the Mamey Colorado Campesino Children's Center in the Manabí province, expressed the following during a meeting in March in Bahía de Caráquez:

My father, a long time ago, used to plant the banana that we call seda, which was in great demand both locally as well as for export to other countries through Panama. Its fruit was large, thick, and tasty. It was the same with pineapples and papayas. Because of their size and taste, these crops and their owners were praised. Now that I have grown up, everything has become smaller: bananas are called Chiquita, and pineapples and papayas are no bigger than a fist. People have substituted their crops of bananas, pineapples, and papayas for smaller varieties. On the other hand, avocado and mango fruits are getting bigger.... That's why now my father plants coffee and cacao.

The participants were eager to know the what for, for whom, why, and how come of our work. We gave answers regarding our intentions. The conclusion was that the results that we conceive of as good, bad, big, or small, depend on the point of view with which they are seen, based on the intentions and proposed use of the product. It was therefore decided that because of the multiple interests involved, those of the campesinos would have first priority, since the rural areas receive fewer of the ideas, proposals, plans, and resources of programs. Campesinos are unaware of the results of many programs, and it is only NFE that has always returned to the countryside.

I think that NFE's path can be compared to a rainbow, with its own colors, a beginning point, a crest, and an end. A rainbow always renews itself, appears in all places, disappears after a time and reappears in another place with splendor. In essence its fragmented colors represent "the oneness in diversity," renewer of promises, dreams, and spiritual joy, stimulating the senses, and promising a lively motivation.

In the early 1970s, when I became a primary school teacher, the campesinos and people who had lost their lands in the countryside and who were living in marginal urban areas could not expect much from their schools. The teacher's job was limited to transmitting instructions, ordering the learning of established texts and the number skills, making sure that all children had their school uniforms, taking attendance, complying with tasks established on charts, and teaching from two to six grades at a time. The greater the distance from the cities, the worse was the quality of the education.

This situation result from the “planning” by the upper levels of the Ministry of Education. Recently graduated and inexperienced teachers, with no personal security or work stability, were sent out to the most difficult and desolate places. It was even harder for them, as they knew no one, and it was even worse if they had lived their whole life in the city. Their immediate response was to leave. Consequently, great amounts of state resources were wasted and the number of directionless lives increased, with the logical consequence of economic, social, and psychological instability for large numbers of people.

If the teacher made the sacrifice of staying in the place to which he was appointed, he would adjust his personality according to the situation. If he was received well by the people, he would live on food or money they provided. He would buy goods and possibly get married and establish a home. He would be one of the few teachers that stayed for several years, but later he would return to the city, attracted by the schools rated as good, very good, or elite. By doing so he invalidated his own work and contributed to the discredit of education in rural and marginal areas.

If, on the contrary, the teacher reluctantly stayed in some distant rural school, he would unleash his discomfort on the innocent “foreign” (because of language, customs, and cultural expressions) students, and apply the law of “learning by punishment.” Typical classrooms not only had tables, blackboards, and chalk, but also imposing sticks or whips hanging in a corner. To this day the picture has not changed, even if rhetoric and discourse have, if plans and programs recommend changes of conduct, and if scandals and sanctions sporadically reveal serious human rights offenses. This situation induces the affected children to behave the same way when they grow up.

Meanwhile, even though individuals may have finished obligatory primary school and, at 18 years of age, obtained their identification cards enabling them to exercise their rights as citizens, it is necessary to have at least nine if not twelve years of schooling to be hired for a decent job, an impossibility for most poor campesinos.

Campesino emigration has produced the chilling figure of 75 percent of the population presently living in cities and only 25 percent in the rural areas. Desertification, deforestation, lack of irrigation water, insufficient basic services, lack of funds for agricultural production, and the scarcity of people prepared to work in the rural areas means that today that the deficiencies seen in the 1970s are worse and more complicated.

In this context the oil boom appeared, redirecting interests, and it was shouted to the four winds that the country would be saved by black gold. Twenty-five years later the majority of the people are still poor. While oil did generate revenues for the nation, it is no less true that corruption grew stronger and more sophisticated. This evil, among

others, has led to the withholding of resources for the education and preparation of the campesino.

From the campesinos' perspective, the beginnings of the rainbow are visible as they become aware of the consequences and the policies enforced at that time by those responsible for their "welfare." In November 1971, a group of people encouraged migrant campesinos in the city of Quito to take part in some discussions at the Motivational Training Center. In those informal conversations, several guidelines and proposals were generated that would later become an outline of creative ways to educate, using varied instruments and materials outside the traditional classroom. This approach was formalized by a group of students from the University of Massachusetts. The University also became the main disseminator of the Ecuadorian experience and later made it explicit in the book *Let Jorge Do It: An Approach to Rural Non-Formal Education*, published by the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts.

The members of the team formed to work on the project came from different places and had different experiences and professional backgrounds. With the project's implementation, commitment grew to the point that later for 90 percent of the team it became a source and motivation for their lives. Such is the case of Patricio Barriga, an international consultant whose work continues to develop within the framework of NFE, and who now lives in Central America. Carlos Moreno is in charge of COMUNIDEC, an NGO that has developed a method for working with rural communities and a book on campesino education and training following the NFE approach.

With our continuous participation in the growth of the campesinos and our convictions in favor of poor people's struggles, we courageously faced accusations of being subversives and possibly "communists" by the traditional church, landlords, and local authorities. At project start-up, whether the task was to select communities or to decide what would be done with the NFE centers, the major resources were discussions and meetings to resolve problems and encourage everybody's active participation. Planning was done with realism, that is, needs were prioritized. Traditional classroom education was questioned and alternative mechanisms and instruments were sought. Being creative and having horizontal relations was interpreted by our detractors as an attack against established authority and order. In this context there were advances in decision-making and the growth of the individuals and the community both among the beneficiaries as well as the facilitating team. This is one of the clearer and better defined "colors" or characteristics and achievements of our work.

Many evaluation reports mention this potential. In a discussion of NFE and radio, the place of feelings, knowledge, and personality is stressed. This corroborated the find-

ings of authors such as Alberto Ochoa, David Evans, Al Schuler, Donald Swanson, Valeria Ickis, and others in regard to our presentations on the result of walking with campesinos down the road of NFE.

This foundation is what has provided validity and coherence during the twenty-five years of NFE's official absence. Facilitators' personalities are strong; now, as before, they stand firm when there is a challenge. When there are suggestions, they do not typically dodge the problems. For example, facilitators in Chimborazo needed no "order" to distribute responsibilities among themselves to carry out the encounters and workshops for this project. As if time had not gone by and the places were the same as at the beginning of the 1970s, they conducted themselves superbly as a team, as if they had always been together, or as if yesterday they had ended a workshop and today they were continuing to work with one another.

The heights of the rainbow were scaled thanks to the maturity of their thinking and the coherence of their arguments. Twenty years later, there is surprise over the "evaluation," through workshops, encounters, cultural and festive events with no "eyes or supervisors" except ourselves and thanks to the support of the NFE Impact Evaluation Project.

The criteria remains the same in the sense that the personality of the facilitators has grown strong as a result of living together. The resources and materials used for training were validated by the facilitators themselves, and the application of different programs have resulted in a change of conduct, transforming them into relevant, committed, acting, incisive, daring, and active change agents.

José Antonio Shagñay is a high school teacher responsible for leading new generations of indigenous people and youth in urban slums. He says that in spite of many courses and formal instruction for many years, never again has he been able to experience the quality and kind of experiential education as what he received in NFE. Eufemia Lara, promoter and teacher in popular education, has not stopped being a facilitator in any of her jobs. Her lucid mind, which came from self-preparation and self-esteem received "during the times of NFE," has allowed her to lead large groups and become an expositor on any development issue, analyzing life from the social, political, economic, and cultural points of view of the communities.

Marcelino Yuquilema has a passion for art and culture. He plays the harp, violin, guitar, and *quena*. He created and participated in the Educational Festival from 1973 to 1977. He is an intelligent and perceptive campesino and is knowledgeable about NFE's developments in the past and plans for the future. He, as do the others, believes that his participation in the NFE project represented a unique period in his life. He has oriented

this experience to educational and development activities, and by doing so his life has become apostolic. His home is based on that experience and he eagerly foresees the future grounded in NFE.

His function as supervisor and educator of new generations demands it. He is the coordinator and leader of the facilitators. He immediately understands and commits himself, analyzes, and resolves. His sure steps contribute to achieving the goal. During this short time of sharing he has been active in everything: while preparing for events and making presentations to large groups as well as in the workshop discussions. He remembers the past, recovers what was relevant and useful in it, and applies it to the present. He mentioned that he had “again been nourished and strengthened to continue striving for the progress of our communities.” This event, far from only gathering information, “has meant a renewal for we facilitators, and commits us to unity and to continue with our work,” he added.

Ernestina Martínez, now a bureaucrat, worked as a second generation facilitator trained by Eufemia Lara. After working as an education promoter, health promoter, and sewing teacher, she found a job as a janitor at a government organization. While she struggled to take care of her three children, she went to high school and received her diploma. She climbed to intermediate positions and then cooperated with the development of rural communities. Ernestina says, “I don’t want to remember my bad experiences. I want to be positive like I was taught to be with NFE. I would prefer to take advantage of them, discuss and share them with others so those who are on this road will reflect on them and take action to serve society.”

Francisco Coro is a political leader who believes in democracy and demands campesino participation at local, regional, and national levels. He is not very expressive, but is very perceptive and is an active militant in indigenous organizations, an authoritative voice in assemblies, and respected by his people in the Province of Chimborazo.

Mesías Silva, from Tutupala, has continued to be a facilitator. He has not continued formal studies but has grown stronger in his “status” as a community leader since the presence of the NFE program. He has not left his community. He is the classic example of a campesino who prepared himself to stay and work for his community. During the years following the project, he has devoted his time to agriculture and animal production. In his words, “I have continued planting trees and breeding domestic animals without overlooking the needs of my community and of the other communities nearby.” He clearly describes the experience of the non-formal centers “conducted by our fellow campesinos themselves and guided by Patricio, Jaime, Gilberto, Aníbal, Enrique, Carlos, and others. I remember the great number of foreigners that would come to study us. I say

frankly to study us, to get to know us, but we would also study them; based on that dialogue and understanding their reasons, we would then open up and work with them on beneficial projects.”

He is typical of the campesinos who never stopped being facilitators because they are tied to the life of their communities, practice their own culture, and defend their interests. The same is true for Rafael and Manuel Yautibuc, Andrés Lema, Pedro Chagñay, José Naula, Petrona Malán, María Bacilio, and others. They combine the regular work on their land with meetings in the communities, programs and fiestas, demanding services to improve basic needs, leading meetings, participating in joint family work, contributing with money and other requirements of the local leaders. The great majority of people educated at the NFE centers are leaders in their communities, and the equality of rights that they encourage and practice, their thoughtful defense of democracy, and their active participation are an example for future generations.

The Value of NFE Training

The question is: How did these results come to be? With what and who and where did this happen? I began by saying that in addition to a series of books, reports, and documents written in English and Spanish there are Technical Notes that are easy to use and summarize the programs and instruments that support NFE. A list of these materials follows:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Technical Notes on The Non-formal Project in Ecuador

1. *El Proyecto de Educación Extra Escolar en Ecuador* (1972). Basic notes, teaching philosophy, and methods of NFE in rural areas.
2. *Concientización y Juegos de Simulación* (1972). Comments on Paulo Freire's educational philosophy and discussion on simulation games as means of awareness building.
3. *Hacienda* (1972). (Game of Life.) Simulation of the Ecuadorian highlands' economic and social situation.
4. *Rumy de El Mercado* (1972). Card game that provides mathematical skills for use in markets.
5. *Método Ashton-Warner de Alfabetización* (1972). The author's approach to training in literacy.
6. *Dados de Letras* (1973). Game for verbal fluency of illiterate people with a non-threatening focus.
7. *Bingo* (1973). Game for verbal and numerical fluency.
8. *Juegos de Fluidez Numérica* (1974). Games for basic practice of arithmetic.
9. *Juegos para Fluidez Verbal* (1995). Games that provide practical skills for literacy teaching.
10. *Tabacundo* (1975). Analysis of the effect of cassette recording as feedback and planning technique for radio school programs.
11. *Modelo Facilitador* (1975). Description of the concept of the facilitator as a development promoter in rural communities.
12. *Uso del Teatro y Títeres* (1975). The use of theater, puppets, and music at the Educational Festival for literacy-teaching and awareness-building purposes.
13. *Fotonovela* (1975). Preparation and use of picture stories as instruments for literacy teaching and awareness building in communities.

Copies of these documents and materials may be requested from:

Ecuador Project
University of Massachusetts
Hills House South, Office 266
Amherst, MA 01002 U.S.A

Each of the Technical Notes was written by the project staff. Therefore, everyone—nationals and foreigners—contributed ideas, practical procedures, and summaries. The sequence followed to produce these materials shows how each instrument responded to a certain period. Therefore, growth of knowledge is more and more nourished with each new instrument, whose variety and applicability benefit the facilitators and the communities.

In general terms, the games are of two types: simulations and fluency improvement activities. Their use in training, taking into consideration the time, human, economic, and material resources, has given satisfactory results.

TRAINING

Before training begins, the communities and candidates for facilitators should be selected. Communities should show openness to innovation and an attitude of acceptance. Early contacts are necessary to establish the rules and make clear that both parties can benefit from the activities. Once commitments and responsibilities have been negotiated and the results have been defined, the candidates for facilitators are selected.

Candidates should be over 16 years of age, must know how to read and write, and should be chosen with the community's consent. They should also attend one of the intensive residential courses. Only on their return to their home areas should they begin carrying out the activities required by their communities. "The facilitator does not go back to his or her community with any prefabricated plan or instructions. He or she has learned group work skills, team planning, reflection, and the use of sociodramas. With these elements and instruments, he or she can design learning activities with his or her community, emphasizing issues such as literacy learning, nutrition, agricultural production, dialogue, and reflection" (cf. Patricio Barriga, *La Educación No Formal: Un Método de Participación*, 1976, p. 3).

The first resource that must be taken into account is the calculation and distribution of the budget to provide for the logistical aspects, the place, and the services necessary to create a comfortable environment. It is also important to create an environment and a training agenda that respect the diversity of the participants in relation to their age, sex, degrees of training experience (sometimes completely absent), cultural roots, language, and place of origin. Participants are so diverse that the leaders and people responsible for the event should have a profound knowledge of group work and human sensitivity.

To this end, there are several steps that can help achieve satisfactory results, although they are not the only ones. In our experience, these steps are as follows:

1. Establish a comfortable learning environment and clarify expectations

As the majority of the participants are campesinos with hardly any educational experience, NFE demands much dedication and human solidarity. People should feel part of the group. This is achieved by exercises and games that allow them to get to know each other. From the beginning the concern is to achieve a feeling of wanting to be there and to learn and to use "horizontal" teaching. This stage can last one or two days. From the beginning all expectations should be expressed and discussed so that everyone understands the scope of the exercises and games, the results that are expected, and the goals of the event.

2. Form the learning community

The resources and activities should be aimed at achieving a non-formal learning-teaching environment where unavoidable differences are established between formal and non-formal education so that, by breaking away from the traditional conception of dominant formal education, individual growth can take place through participation, validation, and affirmation of one's personality within the collective and community context. The result being pursued is to allow people to experience the power of group and intergroup support. Once again, the value of unity in diversity is present, allowing for a commitment to learning, teaching, and growing together.

3. Examine the communities, their current situation, and their vision of the future

The intention in this stage, through the use of drawings and models, is to describe the communities. Based on the outcomes, information is exchanged on what each person knows about the community. If past subjects are touched upon, participants are urged to project into the future. Another purpose is to draw attention to the authorities and organizations that are active in the communities.

4. Motivate toward achievements and success

Using resources such as motivational exercises and group work, participants experience task accomplishment and the use of power. The participants themselves validate and evaluate the accomplishments of the group's growth. The intention is that at all times as the exercises are experienced and analyzed the participants assume ownership of the technique for their own use in the communities.

5. Conceptualize NFE

This is the analysis of the breadth and diversity of this approach and its validation, and the selection and definition of activities and proposals for work in the communities.

6. Plan and prioritize projects

Development projects are prepared with resources from campesino training and planning, through visits to institutions, and through the use of role playing.

7. Consolidate the knowledge and practice of the facilitators; evaluate in a participatory fashion

The degree of assimilation of the theme presented is tested by using creative resources

that include a variety of instruments and audiovisual aids from the area, or through visits with local personalities.

8. Prepare for the return to the communities with some of the materials, tools, and resources

9. Return to the communities with a commitment to participate in a process of evaluation of accomplishments and responsibilities

This summary of actions may have omitted certain resources and activities. Additional details may be found in the documents listed in the bibliography.

AT THE TOP OF THE RAINBOW

This is how I describe the situation experienced after the end of NFE project in Ecuador in 1976. Some of the results deserve to be placed at this level, and some closely related observations are placed in positions of constant movement, with ups and downs that respond to the influences of participating entities, their policies, and to the politicians who govern the country.

In 1976, upon the termination of the NFE project, the provinces involved in the agreement kept the vehicles, office furniture, instruments and materials, as noted previously. The institutional counterpart in this agreement, the Provincial Education Departments, soon took the furniture, equipment, vehicles, and relocated the staff to previously existing positions and to some that had been created during the life of the agreement. Staff retained their jobs only if they responded to the interests of the offices.

The investigation team formed by social communication students of the Central University reported that the official institutions that were obligated to put into practice what had been developed terminated their responsibilities at the close of the project. The intermediate-level offices of official institutions have become used to this appearance and disappearance of new programs with material goods that can be taken advantage of without giving a thought to the methodology, scope, or the results of the projects. And since there is broad support and many services are offered to the official institutions, this attitude continues. Once again campesinos are left adrift, since these offers are not directed to them. The facilitators, in turn, learned to live with this experience. Over time and with their communities, NFE survived along with their hopes and dreams. In practice, the knowledge acquired was never wasted, and the materials that had been prepared, known as “fluency” and “simulations” were passed from hand to hand in the field.

Meanwhile, in the provincial departments and in Quito, whole boxes of letter blocks, market games, magazines, and other support materials produced through costly agreements with the National Service of Didactic Materials grew moldy. Only in Manabí, through the tenacious insistence of Carlos Vélez, Carlos Avellán, Lenin Moreira, Lino Mero, and others, and in spite of departmental shifts and changes in their posts in an effort to disband the group, the NFE office was kept open until 1988. Its training function grew until there were 600 facilitators in training at one point, independent and non-formal in their style. It was also in Manabí that 80 per cent of the facilitators became regular teachers, although they never stopped being facilitators. It is well known that the radio-vision programs, the Pedro Remache and Hugo Candelario radio novels, are still being broadcast on local radio stations. In Cotopaxi, the Radio Program that created the booths continues to be used today. The booths were moved and combined with James

Hoxeng's project at the University of Massachusetts, "Radio Message," which continues campesino program broadcasts corresponding to the efforts of the 1970s.

The most productive time and place can be called the crest of the rainbow. This was due to the survival of NFE in NGOs during the 1980s when the campesino child care centers were created. FODERUMA and the child care centers survived for fourteen years in rural areas, working in education with children under six years of age.

NFE was legitimized by the request for my presence to work in the educational field with NFE. For this, steps were taken by the communities to select facilitators and train them through a sixteen-day residential workshop in Rumipamba, Imbabura. Young people were brought together from all over the country. A new generation of facilitators was being prepared to work in education with children under six, with promoters from their own communities and backing by those same communities and second-level organizations. In the followup carried out by FODERUMA, one can see the benefits: children who are awake, love their communities and their parents, and who are willing to learn in school. This capacity for association facilitates continuity and discourages dropouts.

Parents affirm that they were helped to learn how to take care of their children at a vulnerable age, that is, when they were no longer breast-feeding and playing on the floor, with the danger of infections commonly seen in children. They state that their children, now grown, are more useful and promote equality and democracy in the communities.

Doubting teachers who initially did not favor and looked askance at campesinos supporting the tasks of socializing children now ask that the child care centers be the place where this learning begins. Although the danger is that they will eventually end up within the formal system, at least I believe they will have been "vaccinated," so that they will not experience "educastration," to use the words of a European educator.

FODERUMA's child care centers were supported with funds from oil revenues. That was the golden age. During the government of Dr. Rodrigo Borja, in 1986, the Community Network was established, taking advantage of the child care center experience, which had begun in 1978. Documents, technical staff, campesino promoters, and buildings became a part of this program, without seriously absorbing the rest of the CICA ideas. The main error in planning from a desk and then implementing by remote control is that resources are lost in the field and escape from the vertical control established by the Ministry of Social Welfare. This confirms, unfortunately, the fact that a prepared and committed community is a better guarantor of efficient fulfillment of the proposed purposes and objectives.

Later on, in a struggle following the recent changeover to the government of Sixto

Durán Ballén, the Network was converted into the Children's Rescue Operation (ORI). With almost no functions, it has just now started to act in this interim government. However, the initial proposal involving the active participation of the community is disappearing and the children are put in schools faster than we had imagined. This accelerated "schooling" is a step backward in all regards.

The Institute for Children and Families (INNFA) also has day care centers, under the responsibility of the First Lady. INNFA has specialized staff and economic resources for child care centers, but acts in a vertical way, planning from desks without the participation of users, running the risk of becoming nothing but an ordinary kindergarten.

One exception might be the existence of the child care centers of the "Ayuda en Acción" foundation, 60 per cent of which is directed by the Cayambe Casa Campesina. This Catholic religious organization works through an agreement with INNFA. Payments for promoters and the allocation of resources will be affected when the agreement ends, and they may soon have to close. So the campesinos are starting to take over the centers, with the purpose of negotiating directly with donors and trying to become independent by placing the centers under community management. This effort could save up to thirty-five centers serving an average of fifty children each.

The spirit of NFE continues to live in COMUNIDEC, due to one of its founders, Carlos Moreno, who formed part of the NFE staff from 1972 to 1976. An example is the making of a model of the communities in a workshop or seminar so that the people are more aware of their reality. They specialize in courses on problem solving, a step beyond the practices of NFE in the 1970s.

Independently, in Llano Grande, Pichincha, NFE has been put into practice in the formation of 4-H clubs to create sources of income for high school and university students, through poultry, pig, small animal raising, agricultural projects, and in the creation of cultural groups such as "The Messengers of Culture."

One must bear in mind that NFE goes all the way to the top in the communities and in certain NGOs that live out and practice the philosophy of NFE. On the other hand, official institutions write their own death sentences or allow the project to sink, taking advantage only of the materials. "Neither the NGOs nor the official agencies have ever come back to Tutupala," was the complaint made to the authorities on the day we met in that community.

The policies of the International Monetary Fund banned the social, cultural, and support programs of Ecuador's Central Bank, and worked against the development of the marginal rural communities of the country. By closing FODERUMA, the official institu-

tions once again put an end to a valid initiative and possibly one of the few programs that brought about changes and substantially contributed to the development of marginal communities.

Another proven resource is the National Bilingual Intercultural Education Office, DINEIB, where the facilitators have found fertile ground for earning their living and practicing what they learned. They defend bilingualism, which was a daily practice in the NFE centers. We experienced interculturalism in the NFE in the 1970s, strengthened it in the child care centers, and today we share in it and live its reality in those programs that have become official. Unfortunately these characteristics and training methods lean constantly more toward the formal, but those of us who lived the experience of NFE are pulled toward that method of training.

THE RAINBOW FINALLY TOUCHES THE GROUND

Surprisingly, we have dusted off twenty-five years of existence. The brilliance and authenticity of a project dreamed up abroad and appropriated and practiced in Ecuador has maintained its structure as if it had been carved in stone, untouched by the storms that sweep across the land. While advances in information systems and sophisticated techniques and sciences in other fields reach competitive levels in other nations, life becomes more difficult in Ecuador's rural and high risk marginal areas. The major evils of this century, such as drug addiction and its consequences, and the corruption invading all social strata, mercilessly punish the most impoverished sectors that have no defense mechanisms. This eats away at the soul, spirit, and flesh of millions and millions of people in plain view of those responsible for bringing about change. We, the actors and end products of society, must open up opportunities, make space for the campesinos, allow not only Domitila Chungara to have her say, or Rigoberta Mench—to testify and denounce until all hope is gone, but also to open up space for Eufemia Lara, Mesías Silva, Marcelino, José, Ernestina, the Avellanes and the Cedeños, the Balones, and the Anchundias, in short, the “disinherited by fortune” of Franz Kafka.

There is untouched potential in Tutupala, Balzayán, Pulucate and Sayausí, Cañar, El Bambil, Collao, Danzarín, and Mamey Colorado, among the black and coastal people, among the cholos and the mestizos. We must return to the peoples of the Americas with the simplicity with which NFE came to Ecuador twenty-five years ago, and we must spread out to the peoples at risk throughout the entire world, carrying a basket of large and small fruit, respecting unity in diversity as the rainbow, that sign of faith and hope for all creeds and peoples, teaches us.

To be able to understand and participate profoundly in change, we need to share experiences and recommend what is best and most appropriate. Our campesinos have had no other rural school than NFE, twenty-five years ago in Ecuador.

ABOUT THE ABEL2 PROJECT

USAID's ABEL2 project works to expand access to and improve the quality of basic education, formal education systems, early childhood education, and non-formal education for out-of-school youth and adults. Now working in countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, ABEL2 assists governments and USAID Missions in project design, evaluation, policy reform support, pilot projects, and applied research. ABEL2 also provides managerial and operational support to USAID Missions that are initiating basic education programs. Finally, ABEL2 provides both short and long-term technical assistance and short-term training to build capacity within ministries of education and local schools. ABEL2 concentrates on strengthening the policy reform process, increasing the participation and persistence of girls in basic education, improving the use of technology in education, and developing NGOs.

The ABEL2 Clearinghouse works to ensure that a cycle of collection, assessment, dissemination, and feedback continues throughout the project. It integrates and disseminates results of individual tasks so that information and lessons learned transfer from one context to another. The ABEL2 Clearinghouse also disseminates project experience, research results, and lessons learned to regional networks of governments, NGOs, and donors through a series of information packages, project briefs, and project monographs.

ABEL2 is a consortium of organizations with extensive resources and experience in strengthening education systems throughout the world. The consortium provides continuity from previous USAID projects and makes possible the sharing of experience between countries, institutions, and substantive areas. The Academy for Educational Development heads the ABEL consortium, which also includes Creative Associates International, Inc.; Educational Development Center; Florida State University; Harvard Institute for International Development; and Research Triangle Institute.



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